

SB 380 Public Land Fund: Opportunities to "Think Big"

Compiled by Pat Tabor (pat.tabor@swanmountainoutfitters.com)➤ **Original Ideas on Land Use Fund**

- Several tracts of land locked by private land. Examples include northern Swan range north of Jewel Basin; mountain (don't know name) north of Missouri river in the breaks that is public land but surrounded by private land; Garnet range east and west of Avon-Helmville valley; Quite a bit of the Little Belts, Crazyes, Tobacco, Bitterroot, Lolo, Lewis & Clark, Helena ranges have key public land spots. On all this land the original vision was to go big. Not meaningful to throw \$5,000 to \$10,000 at a land owner and say "open up". But if you granted \$50,000 to construct an ingress road, and had a \$30-50,000 annual lease under a 5-year lease program, that might get some movement. You need a bigger war chest for that.
- Local RACs could use matching funds so that they in turn can grant funds to USFS and other agencies for trail projects and new trails construction.
- Federal RTP (Regional Trails Program) almost was removed. Most states augment RTP with state funds to match or compliment Federal Grants. For snowmobile use in Montana, almost all grooming funds for winter trails come from RTP, perhaps better funding could go to winter trail use benefiting all Montanans.
- USFS closed 80% of roads in several of forests throughout Montana due to Clinton Road Closure EO. Joint road maintenance funding projects could open critical roads giving Montanans access again to certain roads since USFS doesn't have funds.
- Similar to Rocky Mountain Elk, TNC and USFWS and others, funds could go for completely underwriting Conservation/Public Land Easements. These are technical in nature and typically cost between \$10,000 to \$50,000 to accomplish since specialized valuations and documentation is required primarily by the IRS. Participating land owners achieve huge federal income and estate tax benefits for participation, and similar to leases, can be compensated for ongoing easement provision.
- Additional construction of FWP Public Access Points on rivers and streams. Use the same concept for access to land for hunting and other recreation purposes on dry land.
- Species restoration funding, perhaps some of the money (direct to FWP's general license account) can go at bolstering herds at risk such as mule deer, sheep and moose.
- Fund more meaningful and complete game surveys, predator control on public land, and other under funded projects.
- Fund the delisting of Grizzlies project.
- Habitat restoration benefiting sensitive species like mule deer and moose.
- Grants to USFS, DNRC and BLM to rebuild or newly construct trailhead parking, stock facility and hitching rails. Hunters dispersed more widely benefits everyone.